PUBLIC OPINION

IN NIGERIA ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS

The UN Department of Public Information commissioned a public opinion poll in Nigeria to assess the awareness, knowledge and image of the UN. The poll was carried out during August through November 1990.

■ THE RESULTS IN BRIEF

- Over one half of Nigerians are aware of and knowledgeable about the United Nations.
- Approximately fifty per cent of those polled rate the Organization's work as good.
- Interest in the United Nations is high in Nigeria. Specifically, most Nigerians are interested in United Nations activities related to international peace and security, human rights and economic development.

AWARENESS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

FIGURE 1

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE UN

Fifty-seven per cent of Nigerians have heard of the United Nations. Overall, those most familiar with the international Organization are 18-29 year-olds followed by those between the ages of 30 and 34.

The question on awareness about the UN was also asked in 1985 by the research unit of the British Broadcasting Corporation. The survey covered the urban area of Lagos rather than the overall population. Of the 500 Nigerians who were polled, 65 per cent said they had heard of the Organization.

UNITED NATIONS ISSUE NO.13—MARCH 1991

ABILITY TO NAME A UN INSTITUTION

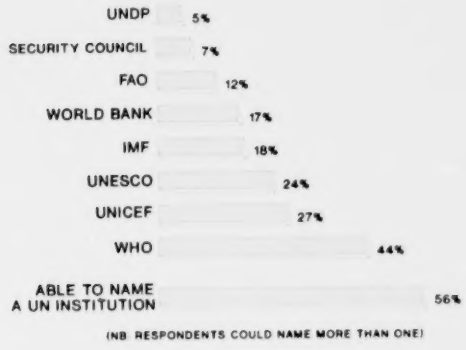

FIGURE 2

UN PERFORMANCE RATING

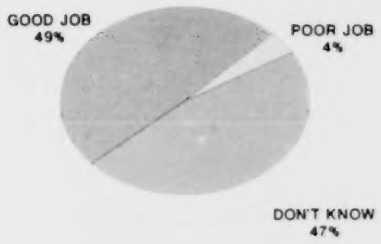

FIGURE 4

IDENTIFYING THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

FIGURE 3

In the 1990 poll, 56 per cent were able to name a UN-related institution or body. WHO, UNICEF and UNESCO are the most known. The profile for those most knowledgeable about the Organization is similar to those aware of it. Those least knowledgeable about the Organization were mostly people over 60 years.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

Presented with a list of five Secretaries-General since 1945, 18 per cent of those polled correctly chose Javier Pérez de Cuéllar as the current UN Secretary-General. Each of the previous Secretaries-General was identified by two per cent or less. However, a majority of Nigerians (75 per cent) said they did not know.

The Secretary-General was well known among government officials and professionals. Those taught about the UN at school were more likely to know the name of the current Secretary-General than those not taught.

RATING UN PERFORMANCE

All population groups in Nigeria were more positive than negative about the performance of the Organization. The most positive were students.

Forty-nine per cent of Nigerians rated the work of the Organization as good, while four per cent rated it as poor. Those not able to evaluate the performance of the Organization (47 per cent) were almost as many as those who said it was doing a good job.

REASONS FOR UN PERFORMANCE RATING

Positive performance ratings by Nigerians were based on the UN's role in maintaining world peace and enhancing economic development. Other comments dwelt on UN technical assistance to developing countries as well as UN health and education programmes geared toward improving living standards in the developing countries.

The UN's role in refugee resettlement and its efforts in fighting racial discrimination were also mentioned.

The major reason given by the relatively few who rated the Organization's work as poor, was that the UN is ineffective in making peace between Member States. A few others perceived the United Nations as not doing enough in fighting apartheid policies in South Africa. Others regarded the policies of the Organization's financial institutions as not favouring developing countries.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Radio is the dominant source of information about the UN in Nigeria. It was cited by 49 per cent of those polled. Other sources of information were television, newspapers, magazines and books.

A third of all Nigerians recalled being taught about the United Nations at school—a majority in secondary/high school.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON THE UN

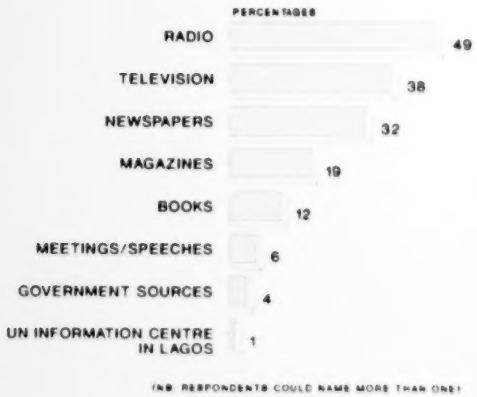

FIGURE 5

TEACHING ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS

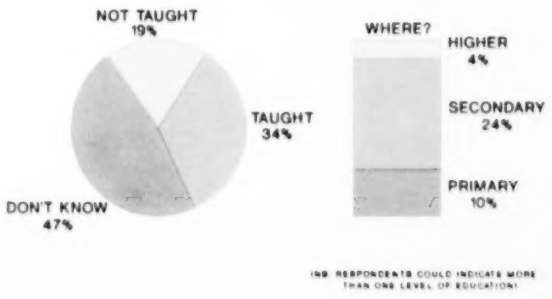

FIGURE 6

INTEREST IN UN ISSUES

International peace and security, human rights and economic development are the top UN issues of interest in Nigeria. African economic recovery, environmental protection, trade and development, and world food problems are other UN issues of interest. About one half of those polled did not answer the question.

INTEREST IN UNITED NATIONS ISSUES

	VERY INTERESTED %	SOMEWHAT INTERESTED %	NOT INTERESTED %
INT'L PEACE AND SECURITY	52	3	1
HUMAN RIGHTS	51	4	1
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	50	5	1
THE WORK OF THE UN IN GENERAL	50	5	1
AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY	48	6	2
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	48	6	1
TRADE & DEVELOPMENT	48	7	1
WORLD FOOD PROBLEMS	48	6	2
CHILDREN'S ISSUES	47	7	2
CRIME PREVENTION	46	7	3
APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA	45	7	3
REFUGEES & DISASTER RELIEF	44	8	3
POPULATION ISSUES	40	11	5
AIDS	40	8	8
DRUG ABUSE	40	8	7
DECOLONIZATION	39	11	6
INT'L LAW & TREATIES	39	11	5
DISARMAMENT	38	10	1
IMPROVING HOUSING CONDITIONS	38	8	4
NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER	37	14	5
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION	36	9	10
EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN	36	3	9
INT'L DEBT CRISIS	35	12	9

(NB: SOME RESPONDENTS INDICATED "DON'T KNOW" OR GAVE NO ANSWER TO SOME OF THE ISSUES)

FIGURE 7

HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

The poll was conducted in Nigeria by Research Bureau Nigeria Limited (RBNL). They interviewed a nationwide representative sample of 8,771 men and women aged 15 and over. The interviews were carried out face-to-face in respondents' homes from August to November 1990. The margin of sampling error is estimated at ± 3 per cent.

The Programme Evaluation and Communications Research Unit of the United Nations Department of Public Information undertakes public opinion polls to "analyse trends of public opinion throughout the world about the activities of the United Nations and the extent to which an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations is being secured". General Assembly resolution 13(1), paragraph 13, Annex 1 of 13 February 1946.

CONCLUSION

The United Nations is perceived by most Nigerians to be a forum for discussing international issues. They see it as an Organization working for world peace. Most Nigerians rate the success of the Organization on the basis of the issues that directly affect their lives.

For more information, contact the Programme Evaluation and Communications Research Unit,
Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, N.Y. 10017
Phone (212) 963-6872, Fax (212) 963-4361

UNITED NATIONS

DPI/1127–40279–March 1991–2M